

***The De-Civilizing Process and Urban Working Class Youth in
Scotland***

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Abstract

This paper seeks to overcome the rather static effect of de-historicized, fixed categories of the British 'underclass'. Specifically, we map the socio-historical development of class disdain and disgust across the distinct state-societies of Scotland and England through the frame of Norbert Elias' account of civilizing and de-civilizing processes. Differences in the historical development of urban Scotland produced a colloquial common sense about lower working class 'Neds' that oscillates between 'humor' and moral outrage. Symbolic power is lubricated at regular intervals by a distinctive, semi-autonomous Scottish media. This is closely associated in the public imagination with more than a century of de-civilized violent gang disorder. In turn, this is accentuated by an autonomous Scottish criminal justice system and, since 1999, the devolution of major administrative state functions culminating in the prospect of Scottish independence dissolving the UK state. This fact colors all discourses about the underclass in Scotland.

Keywords: Scotland, state autonomy, class, underclass, de-civilizing and civilizing processes, criminalization, symbolic power.

Introduction

One effect of the historical precedence of Britain's early development as a capitalist state-society is the deep imprint produced by distinctions of social class. In this context, and until relatively recently, the social category 'working

class' was often worn with pride as a badge of honor in British society. It provided dominated groups with a positive framework for collective self-understanding and identity. Material impoverishment was compensated in part by collective representations of class as an authorized and legitimated source of social solidarity. Relations of class depended on a relatively stable dichotomy of insiders and outsiders. 'Folk like us' were frank, honest and unpretentious while 'people like them' were aloof, pompous and disingenuous. If this image of the British working class too often romanticized, ennobled and homogenized a more complex and internally divided social reality, it nonetheless contained a kernel of truth.

Today, however, elementary truths about Britain as a definite kind of class society are routinely traduced and derided. Over the past two decades 'class' as a structured socio-economic relationship has fallen from public consciousness. It is now an unreliable marker of party political alignment. In the 2000s New Labour governments attempted to expunge 'class' from the lexicon of British politics under its 'Respect' agenda (see Millie, 2009). The removal of 'class' as a political language of social divisions and interests has the effect of obscuring the social structures that determine the possible positions that individuals are compelled to occupy in social space. In its place, public discourses of 'respect and responsibility' through to the Conservative Liberal Democrat UK Coalition government's 'big society' elevate moral, cultural and individualistic explanations of social suffering (see Hancock, Mooney and Neal, 2012). Denial of the structuring effects of class position removes from the socially dominated a crucial source of collective claim-

making. Instead of structural disadvantage in the labor market the blame for material and symbolic dispossession is laid at the door of genetically or morally flawed individuals in ways not so dissimilar from Victorian images of the 'dissolute' and 'undeserving' urban poor. And, *vice versa*, economic success becomes the morally deserved result of genetically and culturally successful individuals and their children.

In this sphere, as Norbert Elias (2012) classically demonstrated, feelings of responsibility, obligation, reciprocity, shame, and propriety are induced as an unintended, spontaneous effect of functional interdependencies. Within the centuries-old process of increased self-restraint, de-civilizing 'spurts' forcibly reassert formal relations of superiority and inferiority that had hitherto been in long-term decline. This is not simply a one-way process, although it may lead to a self-perpetuating cycle of political violence and social disintegration. Elias's focus on the dialectical tension between civilization and de-civilizing *processes* may be substituted for reified *states of being* giving rise to a focus on social and psychological problems of 'incivility' and criminalization (Rodger, 2008). Individuals and cultures that are removed from the force of wider interdependencies, above all, of the labor market and organizational hierarchies, also escape from external disciplines that demand 'civilized' attitudes and conduct. Lacking middle class aspirations, a supposedly indulgent culture of welfare entitlement and public sector self-interest allows inferior social groups to draw on the public good one-sidedly without making any productive contribution in return. Elementary codes of conduct, decency, courtesy and civility are thought to have atrophied within the most deprived

social groups of the working class. Unemployed or under-employed welfare recipients therefore appear to lack the values and behaviors of wider 'civil' society.

Against decadent underclass cultures, UK public policy, at least since the election of New Labour in 1997, engaged in failing attempts to forcibly correct and modify the attitudinal and behavioral deficiencies of dysfunctional individuals and families. Above all, the failure of lower social groups was viewed by New Labour as one of moral indifference and a work avoidance ethos (Haylett, 2001). However, this emphasis on the need for public policy to engage and modify decadent cultures ignored a substantial body of evidence that points to contrary conclusions about changing structures of employment as the primary determinant of poverty and inequality in Britain. Half of all adults living in poverty in the UK are from households that work (52 per cent), either part-time (16 percent), with one or more adult in full-time work (22 percent) or self-employed (11 percent) (McKendrick et al, 2011: 101). Low pay and structural unemployment and underemployment, not cultural attitudes or uncivil conduct, remain root causes of class dispossession and social suffering.

In this climate, the label 'working class' no longer functions in Britain as a marker of authenticity, solidity and respectability but circulates as something base, superficial, backward and shameful: the working class have gone from mythical 'salt of the earth' to reviled 'scum of the earth' (Jones, 2011). Whether belligerent youth, benefit claimants, council tenants or public sector

trade unions, the working class seem distinctly garish, outdated and ungrateful, a moral rubbish heap set against a society newly-minted as 'middle class' according to the self-images of the neoliberal imagination. If the 'working class' figures at all in public discourse then it is as a marginal identity of the young, white urban poor, subject to populist moral and emotional denigration, fear and contempt. In the past two decades, acute public concerns emerged around cultural representations of the marginal figure of 'the Chav' in England and 'the Ned' in Scotland. These categories function as folk devils to evoke middle class feelings of disgust, fear, embarrassment and repugnance (Jones, 2011; Law, 2006a). Middle class entertainers, politicians and journalists embrace discourses about 'Chavs' and 'Neds' - other forms of group hate being ruled out of the game – in a conspicuous display of the cultural competence and moral standards that are required on the other, civilized side of the social ledger.

This paper seeks to overcome the rather static effect of de-historicized, fixed categories of the British 'underclass'. A virulent discourse of disdain and disgust circulates that deploys euphemistic language about a British underclass, alternately termed 'Chavs' in England and 'Neds' in Scotland. Crucially, we seek to shift the optic from the figure of the Chav to that of the Ned. This responds to differences in the socio-historic development of class disdain in the distinct nations of Scotland and England, despite the fact that they both inhabit the same nation-state, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Law, 2006b). National socio-historical development tends to disappear under the widespread assumption that the Chav

phenomenon in England automatically resonates elsewhere in the UK, albeit under different names. Differences in the historical development of urban working class Scotland have produced a casual familiarity with Neds through a colloquial common sense that oscillates between 'humor' and moral outrage. Symbolic power is lubricated at regular intervals by a distinctive, semi-autonomous Scottish media. This is closely associated in the public imagination with more than a century of de-civilized violent gang disorder (Bannister and Fraser, 2008). In turn, this feeds into a historically distinctive and autonomous Scottish criminal justice system and welfare-based institutions. Within this institutional nexus, academic social science in Scotland shares a strong sense of common mission with policy-makers and practitioners in addressing social problems, gang culture, educational under-achievement, and territorial immobility. This sense of national distinctiveness in Scotland is further accentuated by the devolved state-society. Since 1999 the major functions of the central UK state, particularly social policy, have been devolved to a semi-autonomous Scottish state under political demands for increased self-government, a process that will culminate in a referendum in 2014 for constitutional independence from the UK. This fact colors all discourses about the underclass in Scotland.

Civilizing the underclass in Britain

Previously disconnected folk devils began to coalesce in the 1990s with the emergence of the Chav figure in England as a contemptible underclass caricature - idle, feckless, ignorant, slovenly, petty criminal, and promiscuously heterosexual (Jones, 2011). Neds seemed to refer to the same

thing in Scotland. Hayward and Yar (2006: 15) situate 'Ned' as only one of a range of localized terms while 'Chav' has risen to hegemonic status nationally: 'What is new and interesting is the way that one term – 'chav' – has triumphed above all others as the dominant synonym'. 'Chav/Ned' became a journalistic cliché for UK media fears about the wider effects of the lifestyles of the 'white' urban poor. Terms of class disdain, what Tyler (2008: 24) calls 'disgust speech', are mobilized routinely in the public sphere to point the finger at an undeserving stratum of social refuse: 'This disgust speech generates a set of effects, which adhere to, produce, and embellish the disgusting figure of the chav: chavs are white, live on council (or social housing) estates, eat junk food, steal your phones, wear crap sports wear, drink cheap cider, they are the absolute dregs of modern civilization; a social underclass *par excellence*, chavs are disgusting'.

Special malice is reserved for young working class women, routinely depicted as loathsome, self-obsessed, superficial, and promiscuous creatures (Skeggs, 2005, Tyler, 2008). This discourse of disgust and disdain reached fever pitch during media coverage of the disappearance of Shannon Mathews from Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, England, in February 2008 in contrast to the (initially) sympathetic coverage of the missing child Madeleine McCann the previous year. While the middle class McCann family elicited widespread sympathy from journalists and public figures, the Mathews family faced public censure, moral indignation and ridicule (see Mooney and Neal, 2009/2010). Imagined as representative of a wider social stratum, a curious episode involving one troubled family became emblematic of what the journalist Carole

Malone (in Jones, 2011: 22), called 'a sub (human) class that now exists in the murkiest, darkest corners of this country [sic]'.

Much of the preoccupation with class contempt is typically limited to the immediate present. While the public discourse on Chavs/Neds appears to have emerged relatively recently it draws on much older sociolinguistic ideologies of class and race (Bennett, 2012). A much longer historical perspective of class repulsion was identified by Elias (2012: 465) when, in the eighteenth century, the nobility were physically repelled by the ascending bourgeois class: 'Anything that touched their embarrassment-threshold smelt bourgeois, was socially inferior; and inversely: anything bourgeois touched their embarrassment-threshold. It was the necessity to distinguish themselves from anything bourgeois that sharpened this sensitivity ...' Clearly, the bourgeoisie were a rising class encroaching on the highest circles of court society, an entirely different socio-political dynamic from recent bouts of middle class contempt for disenfranchised working class youth. Nonetheless, emotional and moral tensions between class fractions in Britain today need to be embedded in the long-term socio-historical dynamic of what Elias (2012, 2008) called 'the civilizing process'. This refers to the long-run but unintended process in the West that converted the external constraints of social structure into internal self-restraints of bodily dispositions.

This process was, and is, simultaneously social, economic, political, geographical, cultural and psychological. It can be very crudely sketched as follows: as the division of labor advances, greater social interdependencies

emerge; upper classes are restrained from direct physical violence; violence and taxation becomes an exclusive function of the state; larger geographical areas are pacified creating space for the money economy and an urban bourgeoisie to develop; self-restraint becomes increasingly automatic as it spreads to wider groups in society. Uninhibited gratification of the senses was increasingly transformed into a restrained sensibility. This sensibility demands emotional control and empathy with sufferers and places definite limits on arbitrary violence. As punishment and violence are removed from civil society, they become the special preserve of the centralized state.

As people are compelled by the central authority of the state to live in peaceful inter-dependency with each other, social life becomes more predictable and orderly (Elias, 2012: v.2). Violent, unguarded or emotional outbursts become signs of weakness to be censured by impersonal powers of calculated reserve. For Elias a propensity to observe the disciplines of work, even when it can be substituted for idle comfort, is a core characteristic that distinguishes the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie as a dominant class from a decadent court aristocracy. Socially desirable behavior now appears to be produced voluntarily by personal initiative and self-control. The very person of the bourgeois individual, under self-control from the inside out, a '*homo clausus*' or 'closed person', provides an exemplar for the whole society (Elias, 1978: 119). Self-restraint appears to the individual as their own special ability rather than an effect of the impersonal mediation of social interdependencies of markets, commodities and functions (Elias, 2012: 150). Decorous behavior is valorized as the innate and natural ability of the accomplished, hard-

working, well-adjusted middle class individual who observes the cultural impulse to conform to socially acceptable, hence reasonable and dignified, norms and values.

Class and the chains of dependency

It is the lack of cultural and personal discipline that marks out the Chav/Ned underclass as a de-civilizing threat. Excessive displays of degraded consumption by Chav/Neds offend against the closed restraint of the *homo clausus*. For Hayward and Yar (2006) work-determined conceptualizations of a demoralized underclass in the 1980s have been transformed into an ostentatious display of symbolic cultural goods by young people, with Chavs as symbolic of the wider 'society of consumers'. 'Chav' discourses vilify urban youth for disgraceful forms of consumption rather than the worklessness that typified the ideology of the underclass in the 1980s: 'This discourse which pathologizes and marginalizes is fundamentally decoupled from the question of economic capital, replacing it instead with a perceived lack of cultural capital' (Hayward and Yar, 2006: 14; see also Hollingworth and Williams, 2009).

Clearly this formulation parts company with Bourdieu's (1984) insistence that economic capital and cultural capital are mutually convertible forms of currency. Yet Hayward and Yar (2006: 18) insist that, 'if contemporary fascination with the 'chav' is about anything it is about a reconfiguration of the underclass idea through the lens of an unmediated consumer society'. On the contrary, consumption can never be 'unmediated'. By placing the accent on

poor or tasteless consumer 'choices' by Chav/Neds, the many-sided mediation of production and consumption (as well as distribution and exchange) is reduced to a single transparent moment of visibility, in clothing, posture and gait, speech, and so on, as outward markers of the de-civilized subject. Consumption is always the final and most visible 'finishing touch' of a whole society based on the production of objects as exchangeable commodities. Consumption conditions production; it creates the need for production. The objects of production take on the appearance of contingent things which conceals the dense weave of functional interdependencies necessary for its existence. Once it leaves production and enters society, every relation to the product is an external one that depends on a long impersonal chain of functional interdependencies (Elias, 2012: 471-2).

Desirable commodities that appear to the youth as brand markers of lifestyle choices in reality efface their point of origin and prior structuring in the realm of production and circulation. Youth subcultures like Neds may come to over-identify with the apparent contingency of unstable 'choices' in branded products as compensation for their own lack of economic value in what Marx referred to as commodity fetishism. Neds consume commodities that are viewed by the tasteful consumer as vulgar, tainted and ridiculous. In so doing, the excessive fetishization of the (fake) brand by inferior social groups devalorizes it in practice. In their lack of cultural refinement Neds are reminders of insecure, menial toil which 'civilized' taste and manners want to keep at a distance behind the scenes of civilized social life.

Yet underclass figures like Neds are also productive for the wider civilizing process. They form the point of departure for an entire apparatus of professionals, journalists, politicians, state officials, solicitors, police officers, fashion designers, and so on. As Marx (*MECW* 30: 306) noted, even the criminal can be classed as 'productive' for the civilizing process, which always requires an 'uneasy tension and agility' for its further development:

The criminal produces an impression, partly moral and partly tragic, as the case may be, and in this way renders a "service" by arousing the moral and aesthetic feelings of the public. The criminal breaks the monotony and everyday security of bourgeois life. In this way he keeps it from stagnation, and gives rise to that uneasy tension and agility without which even the spur of competition would get blunted.

While Neds/Chavs cannot entirely take credit for the civilizing curve of development, Marx's conceptualization is a necessary reminder of the civilizing counterpoint effect of the most dominated and reviled social groups. Increased integration and mutual restraint often depend on processes of displacement and exclusion elsewhere, what Elias sometimes described as the contradictory tensions of 'civilized barbarism'.

Elias (2012: 422-7) identified this phenomenon as a dual process of 'diminishing contrasts, increasing varieties'. Contrasts and inequalities between classes and state-societies are progressively reduced at the same time as the varieties and nuances of conduct are increased in a controlled de-

controlling' of emotional life. A constant tension is experienced of repulsion and assimilation between the classes, with variations in intensity over time and space but tending overall to become more even and temperate. Relations of dependency both exclude inferior groups at the same time as spreading the standards of civilized conduct. Dominant groups respond with increased restraint and segregation, heightening the distances and tensions in society still further. Yet superordinate groups are not entirely unaffected by the mores and standards of lower groups. Subordinate groups, like 'the underclass', lacking any possibility of upward social mobility may well exhibit a fatalistic vigor in their conduct and manners. From a defined position more or less fixed in social space dominated groups are exercised by far fewer anxieties about 'correct' bourgeois standards of good form, restraint and taste. Such apparent freedom from dependency can exert an attraction as well as a repelling effect on groups more completely gripped by the exigencies of functional dependency, for instance in adopting street fashions, postures or argot of more marginal groups in a controlled decontrolling of self-restraint.

The underclass and civic nationalism

Despite claims to the contrary, explanations of Chavs as a cultural underclass in England cannot be readily translated to account for the 'Ned' phenomenon in Scotland (Hayward and Yar, 2006; Skeggs, 2005). In Scotland the term 'Ned' has taken on symbolic freight for poverty and community breakdown beyond excessive and gaudy forms of consumption. Ned is falsely assumed to denote a 'Non-Educated Delinquent', a pejorative backronym that permits symbolic power to denigrate with impunity under the pseudo-scientific veneer

of an official category much like recent policy uses of NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training) to classify unemployed young people in the UK (Lawson, 2011). As we have already insisted, social figurations take shape under distinctive national forms of state-society development. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (2004: 236) argue, 'each society, at each moment, elaborates a body of social problems taken to be legitimate, worthy of being debated, of being made public and sometimes officialized and, in a sense guaranteed by the state'.

A relatively autonomous state-society in Scotland plays a strategic role in defining youth crime and 'Ned culture' in particular as a major 'social problem' in need of tackling. In February 2012, for example, a report in *The Herald* cited a survey by an insurance company which claimed that 'Ned culture' costs Scottish businesses £740m in 2011 alone with this figure set to rise as unemployment increases (Donnelly, 2012). In the case of Neds as a category of class disdain it is not simply bad cultural taste that is of concern to the agencies of the devolved Scottish state. Rather discourses about Neds construct an image of disorderly and disruptive suspect-subjects in opposition to marketized-images of Scotland as a neoliberal state-society engaged successfully in global competitive accumulation. In this context it is frequently claimed that Scotland is a 'civic nation' that has passed through 'a social revolution' unparalleled in western democracies to become a middle class 'professional society' (see Law and Mooney, 2006). Further confirmation of the image of Scotland as a transformed civic nation appeared to come in August 2011 when its cities were untouched by urban riots while major

English cities were set aflame, leading the Scottish First Minister to claim that such disorders would not take place in Scotland because it is a 'different society' (Carrell, 2011).

This suggests that distinctive civilizing processes internally pacified urban Scotland in contrast to the socio-spatial tensions punctuated by collective violence in urban England. Claims about civilizing processes therefore function as markers of national difference despite deep socio-structural similarities between Scotland and England. Here the Ned figure exercises a different cultural inflection in Scottish society in contrast to claims that the 'Chav' phenomenon in England represents a new consumption-based 'underclass' (Hayward and Yar, 2006; Skeggs, 2005). Ned discourse has longevity at street level in west central Scotland. Etymologically, usage of the term can be traced back at least to the 1950s, though it may have originated in the Edwardian period around 1910 or even further back (Coleman, 2012: 232). Not only are urban discourses about Neds in Scotland of older vintage; they also take less virulent forms than the Chav phenomenon in England. More sympathetic representations of urban working class Scotland can be found in films like Peter Mullan's 2011 film, *Neds*, the fiction of James Kelman and Agnes Owens, the poetry of Tom Leonard and, in a different register, the fantastical lifeworlds of Irvine Welsh stories.

Nonetheless, 'Ned' tends to be a derogatory denominator. Young people rarely use the label to refer to themselves and typically reserve the label 'Ned' for other groups or individuals seen as socially inferior or physically

threatening. One study of the speech practices and social identities of urban adolescents in Glasgow found that self-identification was a highly complex and fraught affair for young urban working class Scots. In forming their own self-categorizations young people routinely negotiate cultural spaces within particular peer networks and authority figures as 'normal' in contrast to Ned pathologies:

Int: So what are you then, what group would you like to be in?

Youth 1: Normal.

What are normal people like?

Me ... I don't know what group I'm in, 'cause my ma'll [mother will] says to me – you're a wee hairy [promiscuous female]. I go – no, I'm no. She goes – aye, you are. Then when I talk, my pals go – you pure talk like a wee Ned.

Int: What are you then?

Youth 2: I'm a wee Glasgow person. I wouldnae say I'm a Ned 'cause I don't go oot and start fights an' aw that. I wouldn't say I'm a wee geeky person either.

(in Timmins et al, 2004)

Working class people in Scotland have long been exposed to the class condescension of everyday speech forms, coded as socially incompetent 'slang' dialects by traditional authority figures even as other, more formal contrasts between classes decay (Stuart-Smith, 1999).

Moreover, this symbolic ascription of negative attributes to an entire social stratum has recently led to the re-categorization of the British working class as an ethnic group. This conflation of class and race draws from a deep well of inferiority categorizations of subordinate groups. In Victorian Britain working class were subject to middle class condescension and opprobrium in being cast as colonized subjects faring little better in the hierarchy of 'civilized' values than the dominated peoples of the British Empire (Bonnett, 1998). Racial discourses are often invoked to establish inferior subject positions in social space. Racialization is often neglected in the construction of 'juvenile delinquency' in the West (Chavez-Garcia, 2007). In the UK 'Chavs' have become synonymous with the '*white* working class' while the category 'working class' is increasingly synonymous with poor whites (Nayak, 2006, Sveinsson, 2009). Stoked by the BBC Television's *White* season in 2007, much publicized liberal angst was displayed about the effects of an abandoned 'white' working class supposedly unable to adjust to multicultural Britain and tempted to seek collective refuge in defensive, exclusionary identities of neo-fascists like the British National Party and the English Defence League (Rhodes, 2011) and the 'British jobs for British workers' wave of illegal solidarity strikes in January 2009.

Defining the 'white' working class mainly in terms of ethnicity rather than social and economic factors shifts the issue away from pronounced social injustices, entrenched and widened by neoliberal political economy, to subjective matters of culture, attitude and lifestyle (Haylett, 2001, Nayak,

2006). Similarly, Neds are discussed as referring to the 'white' working class in Scotland, the ethnic equivalent to the 'whiteness' of Chavs in England (see Raisborough and Adams, 2008). However, such attributions ignore the relative absence of ethnic categorizations for the working class in Scotland. Across almost all public discourse in Scotland, civic nationalism eclipses ethnic nationalism, although an unspoken relationship exists between the categories (Kamusella, 2012). Here the sole exception appears to be ethno-religious 'sectarian' divisions between Protestants and Catholics at football games. Crowd misconduct at football games is to be civilized by the Scottish government through the introduction in 2012 of new legislation, The Offensive Behavior at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012 that redefines as a 'sectarian hate crime' any offensive reference to the religious or political posture of rival fans.

Beyond the arbitrary ethnicization of class in Scotland, constructions of a de-civilized universe 're-animalizes' degraded people and places by collapsing any distinction between nature and culture. In this way the most dominated and reviled social groups can be exiled from the public culture of the civic nation. Class habitus and environmental habitat become indistinguishable. For instance, Haylett (2003: 61-3) notes an implicit correlation between council housing, 'estate culture' and 'welfare culture' in England. This semantic culture-nature slippage enables 'disorderly' and 'dysfunctional' aspects of urban working class habitus to be perceptually restructured in quasi-animalistic terms (see also Cook, 2006: 43-46). While not solely an 'urban phenomenon' in Scotland, Ned culture and behavior are assumed to be the

marginalized practices of disaffected and alienated working class youth in 'the schemes' of Scotland's large public housing estates (see Johnstone and Mooney, 2007; Law, Mooney and Helms, 2010). Public housing has played a major historical role in the fabric of urban Scotland and retains a symbolic significance as degraded criminogenic environments (Damer, 1989).

Public housing estates in urban Scotland are constructed as de-civilized locales, populated by animalistic creatures who naturalistically revel in deserved material and cultural poverty. This trope surfaced with particular venom over the Glasgow East by-election in 2008, when populist class hatred among mainly London-based journalists pathologized the area and its people as 'Shettleston Man' culturally locked into welfare despondency and self-exclusion (Mooney, 2009). De-industrialized cities like Glasgow and Dundee undoubtedly have deep-seated problems. Until recently, Glasgow had some of the highest levels of people on Incapacity Benefit, a particular target for anti-working class diatribes. At its peak one in five working age adults were claiming Incapacity Benefit, yet after 2003 the number of claimants began falling faster than elsewhere. A major academic study shows that this pattern represents a form of 'disguised unemployment', not a welfare dependency-despondency subculture. It reflects the loss of 100,000 manufacturing jobs in the city between 1971 and 1991 - during the 1980s Glasgow fell precipitously from 208 to tenth place in the UK for economic inactivity rates - followed by improvements in the local job market in the early 2000s, concurrent with falling numbers on Incapacity Benefit (Webster, et al, 2010).

While Glasgow and the Clydeside conurbation feature most prominently in many of the stories and representations of Ned behavior, most of Scotland's main towns and cities are assumed to have a Ned 'problem'. Towns like Dundee are subject to a semantic invective of class, gender and public housing on hostile websites that operate under the ideological alibi that it's 'just a laugh' (Law, 2006a; see also Jones, 2011). Such sites simultaneously mock the poverty of public housing, promiscuous teenage mothers, endemic criminality, dissolute lifestyles, welfare dependency, squalid environment, and the supposedly general lack of cultural taste among the poor.

Civilizing through criminalizing

As a derogatory term 'Ned' emerged from the streets of Glasgow to become synonymous with disgraceful cultural forms, bestial youth gangs, knife crime and territorial violence. This is especially evident in some of the ways in which the criminal justice system in Scotland is arguably converging with the more punitive and draconian measures in England and Wales to deal with suspect subjects, primarily the impoverished working class, young people and women (see Croall, Mooney and Munro, 2010). Here the Scottish state is engaged in a process of internal pacification for problem places and problem people as the last remaining vestiges of de-civilized urbanism.

With the re-establishment of a Scottish Parliament in 1999 there was, in theory at least, some potential for the already distinctive and separate Scottish criminal justice system to diverge markedly from the policies and practices of criminal justice in England and Wales. A democratic concern with welfare and

rehabilitation have long been claimed to form the distinguishing core of the Scottish criminal justice system (McAra, 1999). As a consequence communitarian public provision of welfare and mutual support appear as key civic or civilizing values (McAra, 2004). First, the 1932 Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act imposed a statutory duty on Courts to prioritize the welfare of the child. In the late 1960s the creation of Children's Hearings panels promoted rehabilitation rather than retribution in order to avoid the criminalization of children (Croall, 2005; Ferguson, 2005; McAra, 2004, 2006). The welfarist philosophy of Kibbrandron was the dominant approach to youth justice in Scotland for 30 years until the Children (Scotland) Act of 1995 substituted the principle of protection of the child as offender with the principle of protection of the public as victim.

Since the early 2000s there has been a steady shift in Scottish criminal justice, particularly in the field of youth justice, towards a more penal stance, eroding the promise that devolution would strengthen Scotland's traditional welfare ethos. Indeed signs of a shift towards a more punitive approach were already evident in 1998, when young people living on public housing estates in the Scottish town of Hamilton were subjected to a six-month curfew. Under this scheme any young people under the age of 15 on the streets after 8pm judged by the police to represent a danger to themselves or to others were escorted home to their parents' care (*The Guardian*, April 11, 1998).

Notable here is a decade-long politics of 'anti-social behavior' (ASB) (see Krause, this volume). The construction of 'anti-social behavior' as a key

criminal justice issue in Scotland, closely parallels in important respects the emergence of an ASB 'problem' in England and Wales, fuelled by a growing middle class concern with the 'problem' of young repeat offenders. This concern was reflected in the Partnership Agreement between Labour and the Liberal Democrats in forming the ruling Scottish Executive between 2003 and 2007 (Scottish Executive, 2003a). In the 2003 Scottish Executive Report, *Putting Our Communities First* (2003b), for instance, ASB includes young people 'hanging around' and other relatively minor transgressions of common decency such as litter, graffiti and dog fouling! In the culture, retail and leisure-led regeneration of Glasgow, a New York-style 'zero tolerance' of 'aggressive begging', prostitution, gangs, alcohol and general 'anti-social' conduct attempted to sweep the city centre economy clean of its urban dross (Helms, 2008).

Behind this ambiguity, however, lies a remorseless concern with behavior modification. In turn, underlying structural causes of urban deprivation are largely ignored and/or marginalized. Instead the threat of withdrawal of benefit entitlements and other punitive measures predominate (Rodger, 2008). More important, the ideology of ASB has the effect of lowering the threshold between everyday life and the criminal justice system. A greater range of behaviors and lifestyles now fall under the gaze and policies of the state and social control agencies (Cook, 2006: 80). Such sentiments are reflected in more unforgiving approaches to youth criminal justice. In 2002 an Action Plan to Reduce Youth Crime was published which pinpointed repeat and persistent offenders as a key target. In 2003 Pilot Fast Track hearings for youth

offenders and a Pilot Youth Court scheme were launched (with the Minister for Justice commenting that '*punishment is a key part of the youth justice process*') at Hamilton and Airdrie Sheriff's Court (see Piacentini and Walters, 2006). In 2004 the Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act included the extension of ASBOs to include 12-16 year olds, police powers to disperse groups, the provision of electronic tagging to under-16s, Community Reparation Orders (for those aged 12+) and Parental Orders. Amidst political and media rhetoric about '*plagues of group disorder*' (Margaret Curran, quoted in *The Scotsman*, June 18, 2004), one could be forgiven for thinking that Scotland was gripped by a massive and general upsurge in youth crime. This heightened politics of youth criminality coincided with a spike in recorded crime in Scotland, which, since that point, has been in steady decline, falling to its lowest level in thirty years by 2010 (The Scottish Government, 2011).

With the election of a minority Scottish National Party (SNP) Scottish Government in 2007, and subsequently its re-election as a majority government in 2011, it has generally been accepted that the SNP have been less punitive than its Labour-Liberal Democrat predecessors (see McNeill, 2010). At the May 2011 Scottish elections it was Labour that presented a much more punitive message than the SNP. The clearest indications of a 'softer' approach from the SNP in government is that there has been a markedly reduced concern with anti-social behavior and less of an emphasis on the behavior and problems of persistent young offenders. The SNP Government's approach in this area, reflected in the key policy document, *Preventing Offending by Young People: A Framework for Action* (Scottish

Government, 2008) reflects what McAra and McVie (2010) have characterized as an 'uneasy' mix of welfarist, actuarialist and retributive influences. The welfarist elements are evident from the outset, the document beginning with a largely positive statement about the contribution of young people to Scottish society in general (McNeil 2010:51). An emphasis on children's well-being connected youth crime to welfare institutions such as education and health, maintaining a distance from the criminal justice system, while at the same time favoring early and intensive intervention for those classed as at 'risk'. While it is important to remain cautious about claims about the welfarist basis of criminal justice policy in Scotland, especially in relation to youth justice (Muncie, 2005), the approach of the SNP government marks something of a retreat from the steady trend in the early to mid 2000s towards a convergence in youth justice policy making in Scotland with that in England and Wales, which remains by most measures much more punitive (see Croall, 2012).

De-civilizing media and symbolic power

While Elias examined 'manners books' from the Middle Ages onwards to chart the emergence of self-restraint and correct conduct among the upper classes in Europe, in the present, a broad range of mass media perform a similar function as texts concerned to instruct audiences in good taste and conduct. Scotland not only has a semi-state apparatus of its own but also a quasi-autonomous media of long standing (Blain and Hutchison, 2008). Much of the output of television in Scotland concerns comedy, current affairs and sport. It also has a tradition of documentary 'realist' film-making about social problems.

As moral lessons against social impropriety and incompetence, television programs typically invite viewers to adopt an affronted bourgeois stance of superiority, good taste and social competence in contrast to the inept displays of social inferiority, cultural ignorance and domestic incompetence of the lower classes (Law and Mooney, 2011/12). One of the most popular television programs in Scotland in recent decades is the comedy series *Chewin' the Fat* produced by BBC Scotland. This features a series of sketches and skits including two characters immediately recognizable by Scottish viewers as 'the Neds', attired in 'typical' Ned clothing, Burberry-style check baseball caps and tracksuits ('trackies'). *Chewing the Fat* also features sketches about 'Ned TV' and a Glasgow-based 'Ned Swimming Gala' in which violence, disorder and mayhem in general are presented as the key cultural attributes of Neds (Law, 2006a).

While comedic representations may strike a sympathetically parodic tone, more realist depictions can have an insidious ideological effect in portrayals of the urban poor as barbarous beasts. This was graphically announced by a controversial documentary made in urban Scotland *The Scheme* (BBC, 2010/11) which depicted the daily lives of six families from the Onthank and Knockinlaw impoverished housing estates in Kilmarnock (Law and Mooney, 2011/12). A cast of characters were seen to battle against a series of material, personal and social disadvantages: drug dependency, petty crime, casual violence, dog soiled carpets, ASBOS, teenage pregnancy and abortion, single parenting, foul language, imprisonment, ill health and bereavement. Originally promoted by BBC Scotland as 'a snapshot of life in modern day Scotland', the

cast of characters and location is not at all representative of Scottish society. The most that a BBC Scotland spokeswoman could claim was that 'it is representative of the six families who took part'. Although the program was promoted as emblematic of 'important social problems', on the contrary, it can lay no claim to depicting the typical characteristics of even the bottom decile of Scottish society.

Some compared the stigmatization effect that *The Scheme* had on Onthank with that of a BBC documentary, *The Fourth World*, about the Lilybank scheme in 1970s Glasgow (Alexander, 2010). But the earlier documentary was a more earnest exercise in serious social documentary analysis, centered around the participant observation of social policy academic and activist Kay Carmichael's attempt to adjust to 'the hostile and ugly' world during a three month stay in the scheme. It gave expression to bored teenagers, gang fights, casual violence, glue sniffing and vandalism, fractious neighbors and tempestuous public exchanges. But where *The Fourth World* had a sense of political mission and social analysis, however limited, *The Scheme* flatters a morbid fascination for abject social suffering. Little sense is provided of the wider forces of neoliberal political economy that have over the past thirty years restructured the material conditions of life for former industrial working class communities in Kilmarnock and elsewhere across urban Scotland.

INSERT Table One and Figure One around here

As well as broadcast media, the 'Ned' underclass figures regularly in Scotland's semi-autonomous print media, which routinely clothes itself as distinctively 'Scottish' (that is, not English and increasingly not specifically British either) (Law, 2001). The use of Neds in the Scottish press expresses a distinctive temporal pattern and more intensive usage than Chavs in the press in England. Taking the blunt instrument of a Lexis-Nexis search of selected Scottish newspapers¹ (*not* including Scottish editions of large circulation papers like *The Sun*), the term 'Neds' was barely mentioned by the press in the 1990s except in the 'humorous' columns of Jack Mclean and Tom Shields in *The Herald*. Table One and Figure One show that this has increased steadily, especially since 1999 – the year of the opening of the Scottish Parliament – and reached a peak of more than a thousand citations in 2003 – the year when political concerns with Ned behavior were at their zenith and when an attempt was made in the Scottish Parliament to ban the use of the term. This compares with the highpoint for 'Chavs' of all UK newspapers of 946 mentions in 2005 found by Hayward and Yar (2006: 10). While the overall trend since the early 2000s has been downwards, nonetheless post-2003 the number of citations has consistently been higher than pre-2003. Between 2001 and 2006 the well-known Scottish tabloid the *Daily Record* and sister paper *Sunday Mail* used the term three times more regularly than the 'quality' Glasgow papers *The Herald* and *Sunday Herald*, who tended to use it twice as much as the Edinburgh-based *Scotsman* and *Scotland on Sunday* papers. Since the high point of 2003/2004 use of the term in these newspapers has

¹ The frequency count provides a rough approximation of the pattern of 'Ned' usage in the Scottish press. It includes occasional uses of 'Ned' as abbreviation for the name Edward and the country Netherlands.

generally declined albeit unevenly. The *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail*, however, continued to have at least twice the number of citations as the other main Scottish papers though, surprisingly, in 2010/2011, the frequency of Ned citations in *The Herald/Sunday Herald* appeared to surpass that of the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* (see Figure TWO). These papers cater for a predominantly west-central Scotland readership, the region that spawned the Ned as a colloquial figure.

Insert Figure Two around here

Print culture also spawned a new genre of Chav-Ned humor. Ned joke books began to appear, including *The Little Book of Neds* (2005), *Ned Jokes* (2007) and *Ned Speak* (2006) by Lee Bok, who is also credited with the equally vitriolic *The Little Book of Chavs* (2004) and *The Chav Guide to Life* (2006). *The Little Book Of Chavs* quickly sold out its first print run of 100,000, an indication that these cheaply produced texts struck a wider chord about class anxieties and that hate humor can prove a profitable enterprise. These books recycle the same hackneyed hateful jokes that once passed for publicly acceptable ‘banter’ directed against subordinate groups like ethnic minorities, women and homosexuals (Billig, 2001).

Amidst this spate of hate humor books appeared *Nedworld* in 2005, which satirizes ‘Ned’ culture under the pseudonyms ‘Kylie Pilrig’ and ‘Keanu McGlinchy’. It attempts this in the vernacular of the Glaswegian working class but fails to maintain anything like a consistent narrative voice, standing as it

does far outside the stereotyped milieu it aims to humorously depict. From start to finish a torrent of stereotyped class hatred is unleashed in *Nedworld* that would be legally impossible against any other minority group in the UK. It purports to shed humorous insight into 'the outrageous lifestyle of the ASBO generation'. In fact its clichéd jokes merely repeat the typical race hate jokes so common to British society in the 1970s. This example is indicative of hundreds of others similar in tone and structure:

A ned died pure poor and many local shops donated money to the fund for his funeral out of sympathy. The manager of the jeweller's was asked to donate a fiver. 'Only a fiver?', he asked. 'Only a fiver to bury Brad-Pitt Mackenzie? Here's a cheque. Go and bury one hundred of them?' (Pilrig and McGlinchy, 2005: 64).

Here the reader is invited to share the genocidal desire of the joke teller for the physical elimination of 'Neds' in their hundreds. It may be objected that 'its only a joke' but as the rhetorical psychologist Michael Billig (2001) notes, hate jokes dissemble in their enmity towards less powerful stereotyped groups. In the case of such jokes the reader is asked to identify with the sentiments of someone speaking from a more dominant position in social space, here a manager of a jeweler shop, and with the view that homicidal hatred of the 'pure poor' and 'Neds' as an entire social group is justified. As one reviewer noted, the book provides

an index of middle-class fears about the underclass [sic]. It had to be written sooner or later and is, in some perverse way, timely. It flies in the face of politically correct ideas about representing the long-term unemployed, the urban poor, the non-educated and delinquent. (Morrison, 2005)

In contrast to the 'ultimate race hate word', the n-word, which as Billig (2001: 278) notes, 'announces hatred without semantic constraint', 'Ned' has become a word that can be invoked over and over again since little semantic social constraint or self-restraint is demanded when referring to the most dominated social group of the 'white' working class. Ned-type characters of ridicule even appeared in children's comic papers like *The Beano*, a popular comic produced in Dundee. It featured a new family, 'The Neds', comprising 'Ned', 'Nedette' and their kids, 'Asbo' and 'Chavette' (December 17, 2005 and April 18, 2006; see Raisborough and Adams, 2008), leading to protests in the Scottish Parliament against 'classism' and challenges from Scotland's Children's Commissioner (*Sunday Times*, February 5, 2006; *The Scotsman*, February 6, 2006). These counter-protests against denigration represent yet another indication of some of the ambivalences about 'Neds' in Scottish civic and political institutions, in sharp contrast to the widespread contempt for Chavs so effortlessly expressed by the English political and media establishment (Jones, 2011).

Conclusion

For some sociologists 'working class' is primarily a cultural or moral category as much as or more than it is a dynamic socio-economic relationship (Sayer, 2005). In this perspective, class is considered 'relational' insofar as it is constructed through the attribution or denial of moral worth by some other group with sufficient social power to make authoritative value judgments. Sociologists appear less concerned to foreground the historical processes and impersonal structuring of unequal social positions by political economy and public policy agendas. A focus on the tension identified by Elias between civilizing and de-civilizing processes resituates cultural and material marginality within the curve of development of Scotland as a distinct state-society. From this perspective, it becomes necessary to distinguish Neds from Chavs as marginalized devil figures within the distinctive socio-political trajectories of Scotland and England.

Of course, as marginalized underclass figures subject to overlapping histories of class disgust, Neds and Chavs share a set of attributed characteristics: tasteless clothing, alcohol and drug abuse, violence, sexual promiscuity, territorial gang membership, loud, risky and reckless conduct. As a collectively imagined category, the Chav/Ned figure offends against the ideological and psychological weight of a much longer 'civilizing process' of class conditioning. Within the process of 'diminishing contrasts, increasing varieties', the recent ideological spurt of underclass contempt for Neds and Chavs elicits emotional repulsion and disgust for lower social groups. Middle class fear, shame and embarrassment are palpable responses to the (mediated) presence of class crudity. In a period of rapid and uncertain social

change, anything seen as shameful for aspirational social groups is filtered through an all-encompassing prism of social inferiority. As a denigrated social body, the figure of the Chav/Ned reeks of impropriety and, contrariwise, cultural vulgarity smells of the Chav/Ned.

However, the ascription of shared consumption and behavioral patterns applicable to both Neds and Chavs accepts at face value generic labels of 'incivility' that obscure national (and local) differences in social development. The social, institutional, media and political agitation over Neds in Scotland has distinct national aspects. These need to be carefully delineated. Rather than homogenizing dominated social groups under the sign of the Chav figure particular to England as a state-society, a different historical development of state-society in Scotland suggests that the Ned represents a more ambiguous underclass figure. It can be called upon to symbolize good-natured humor or social critique but equally may be mobilized for moral outrage and criminalization processes. Elias has been invoked by academics to highlight the 'criminalization' of welfare as a new phase in the de-civilizing process (Rodger, 2008). This tends to operate as a single process across the UK, albeit allowing for some policy differences in Scotland, as more punitive and draconian than in the past in raising public fears about 'incivility' rather than addressing traditional concerns about equality and social justice. In contrast, we have sought to provide a longer-run perspective which emphasizes the *tension* between civilizing and de-civilizing processes (plural) within the curve of national development in Scotland as a distinct state-society. Here the nationally autonomous institutions of Scottish state and civil society – the

criminal justice system, policy-making networks, government, and media producers – rely on the ‘anti-social’ underclass figure of the Ned to formalize the civilizing process and to correct and modify informal urban subcultures developed over a century or more. Civilizing pressures are not a zero-sum process of repulsion and exclusion but are marked by ambivalences and mediations in the dialectical tensions generated by class positioning in social space.

While the major welfare functions of the state were devolved to Scotland a dozen years ago, and with the UK state increasingly losing its territorial integrity, the Scottish government finds itself torn between welfare nationalism and competitive nationalism (Law and Mooney, 2012). Within this contradictory space, civilizing processes are subject to the dynamic tensions produced by the formal, external demands of the civic-welfare nation and the informal pressures of individuals competing in crisis-prone marketized conditions. Neds appear as a de-civilizing underclass counterpoint to the devolved state-society welfare bargain conceived as a national platform for competitive accumulation. A new phase of public austerity, deepening neoliberal priorities and the Independence referendum in 2014 will ensure that problematic and ambivalent representations of the underclass will remain subject to the development of Scotland as a distinctive state-society.

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Table 1: Annual frequency of ‘Neds’ in selected Scottish newspaper titles (1990-2011)

Calendar year	Quantity
2011	751
2010	520
2009	374
2008	466
2007	526
2006	251
2005	554
2004	820
2003	1012
2002	483
2001	342
2000	237
1999	240
1998	102
1997	61
1996	61
1995	54
1994	44
1993	29
1992	19

1991	0
1990	0

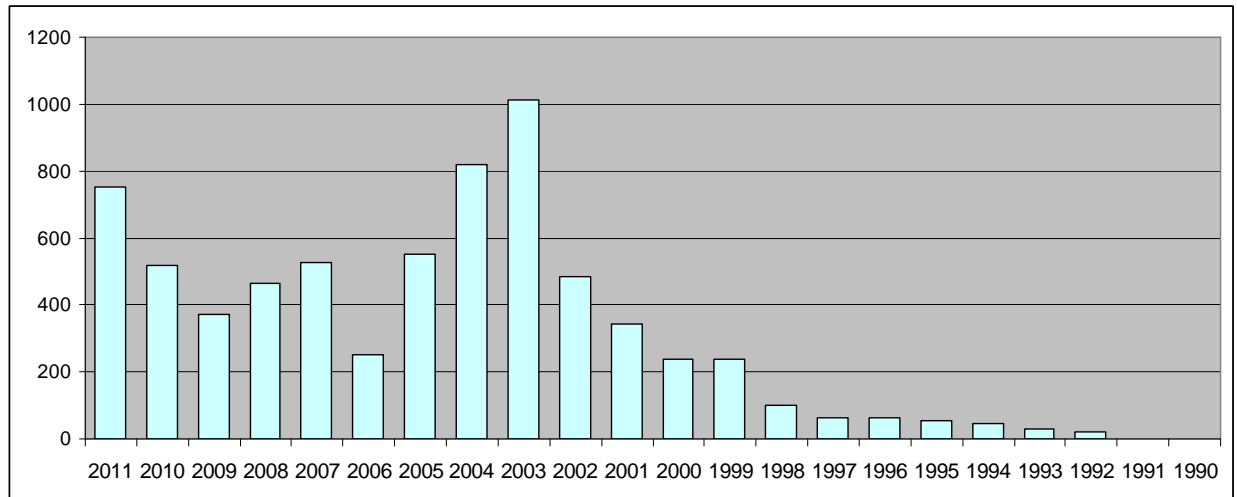


Figure 1: Total 'Neds' word frequency in selected Scottish newspaper titles (1990-2011)

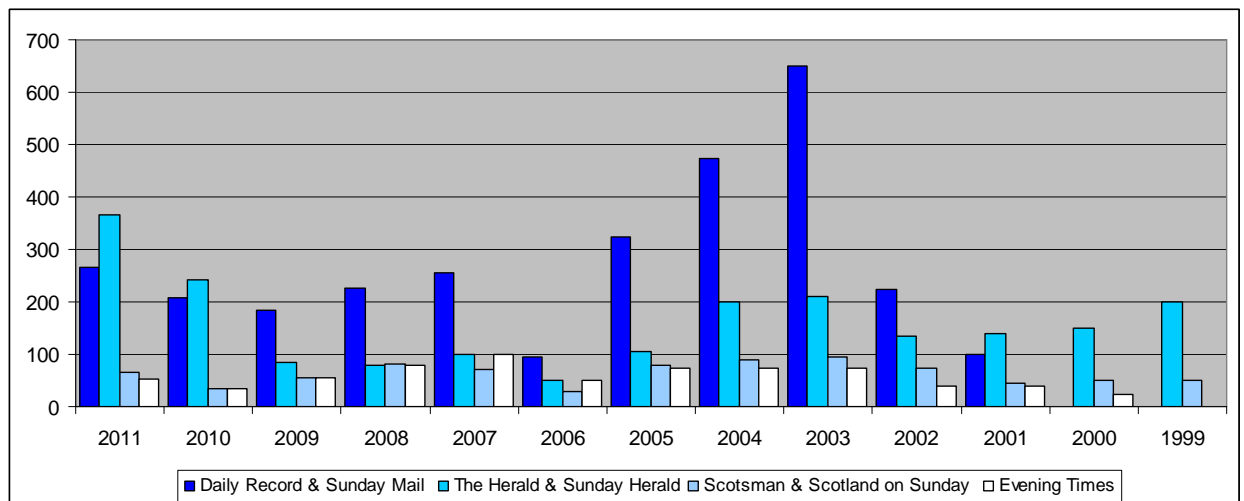


Figure 2: 'Neds' frequency count in selected Scottish newspaper titles (1999-2011)